

Message Text

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ACTION SCCT-01

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 L-03 PPT-01 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: NA

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REFS: (A) STATE 172898, (B) PARIS 19871

1. EMBASSY FIRST AWARE JULY 2 THAT MR AND MRS KARFUNKEL WERE AMONG HOSTAGES BEING HELD IN ENTEBBE UPON RECEIPT REF (B). ON MORNING OF JULY 4, WHEN IT WAS KNOWN THAT HOSTAGES WERE EN ROUTE TO ISRAEL, DUTY OFFICER TRIED TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON PASSENGER LIST, BUT THIS INFORMATION WAS NOT BEING RELEASED BY GOI.

2. WE ARE AWARE OF KARFUNKELS' OPINION THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN MET ON ARRIVAL, BUT WE DO NOT AGREE THAT WAS REQUIRED OR EVEN APPROPRIATE. THEIR FEELING OF DISAPPOINTMENT WAS HEIGHTENED BY THOUSANDS OF ISRAELIS WHO HAD GONE TO THE AIRPORT WITHOUT HAVING ARRIVAL INFORMATION AND WHO GREETED THE HOSTAGES WITH WILD ENTHUSIASM. HOWEVER, THOSE THOUSANDS WERE PRESENT NOT SO MUCH TO GREET THE HOSTAGES AS TO PARTICIPATE IN A NATIONAL EVENT OF GREAT HISTORICAL AND EMOTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE. THE PRESENCE OF A CONSULAR OFFICER AT THE AIRPORT WOULD NOT HAVE ASSISTED THE KARFUNKEL S.

WE DETERMINED THAT GOI AND AIR FRANCE WOULD PROVIDE SERVICES REQUESTED BY RESCUED PASSENGERS. BOTH THE DUTY OFFICER AND A CONSULAR OFFICER MADE EVERY EFFORT THROUGHOUT SUNDAY AFTERNOON TO EXPEDITE KARFUNKEL'S DEPARTURE AND TO NOTIFY THEIR FAMILY.

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3. THE DUTY OFFICER, WHO HAD BEEN ON DUTY ALL NIGHT MONITORING INFORMATION REGARDING ENTEBBE OPERATION AND RELEASE OF HOSTAGES, WAS INFORMED ABOUT NOON OF A MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL KARFUNKEL OF NEW YORK REQUESTING EMBASSY TO CONTACT GEORGE AND RENEE KARFUNKEL AND TO HELP THEM. AT 1330 HE LEARNED THAT THE KARFUNKELS WERE ON THEIR WAY TO THE EMBASSY WHERE THEY ARRIVED AT 1400. THE DUTY OFFICER TALKED TO THEM ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE AND MADE SEVERAL EFFORTS TO CALL MICHAEL KARFUNKEL IN NEW YORK AND THE OPERATIONS CENTER AT THE DEPT.; HE THEN TURNED THEM OVER TO A CONSULAR OFFICER FOR PROCESSING THEIR TRAVEL DOCUMENTS. WHILE THEY WERE WITH THE CONSULAR OFFICER, THE DUTY OFFICER REACHED THE OPERATIONS CENTER, EXPLAINED THAT THE KARFUNKELS WERE WELL AND ASKED THAT THEIR FAMILY BE NOTIFIED.

4. MUCH OF THE REMAINDER OF THE DAY WAS DEVOTED TO OBTAINING SUBSTITUTE TICKETS FOR THE KARFUNKELS. AIR FRANCE, WHICH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ONWARD TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS, LIMITED ITSELF TO ARRANGING HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS AND ISSUED A TICKET FOR TEL AVIV PARIS ONLY AFTER THE DUTY OFFICER SIGNED A PERSONAL GUARANTEE ASSURING PAYMENT FOR THE TICKETS. TWA CLAIMED IT LACKED ADEQUATE INFORMATION RE THE KARFUNKEL TICKETS AND DELAYED ISSUING REPLACEMENTS UNTIL LATE EVENING DESPITE CONTINUOUS PRODDING FROM DUTY OFFICER. EMBASSY WAS EVENTUALLY ABLE TO PERSUADE TWA TO CARRY KARFUNKELS ON FIRST AVAILABLE FLIGHT TO NEW YORK ON JULY 5 DESPITE LACK OF DESIRED INFORMATION REGARDING NATURE OF ORIGINAL TICKETS WHICH HAD BEEN LOST IN UGANDA. LOCAL TWA MANAGER ASSURED EMBASSY THAT KARFUNKELS WOULD BE PICKED UP AT HOTEL AND WOULD RECEIVE VIP TREATMENT. DUTY OFFICER KEPT KARFUNKELS CONTINUALLY INFORMED OF HIS EFFORTS AND ASSURED THEM THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO LEAVE THE NEXT DAY AND THAT EVERYTHING WOULD BE DONE TO EXPEDITE THEIR DEPARTURE. WHILE DUTY OFFICER WAS PRE-OCCUPIED OBTAINING TICKETS AND CALLING WASHINGTON AND/OR NEW YORK, CONSULAR OFFICER ARRANGED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS.

5. THE DELAY DUE TO SEARCH FOR MESSAGES RE KARFUNKELS WHICH HAD ARRIVED AFTER DUTY HOURS WAS NO MORE THAN 15-20 MINUTES. KARFUNKELS' ALLEGATION THAT THEY WERE KEPT AT EMBASSY FOR FIVE HOURS ON JULY 4 IS INCORRECT. THEY WERE HERE FOR MAXIMUM OF TWO HOURS DURING WHICH DUTY OFFICER AND CONSULAR OFFICER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ATTEMPTED TO ARRANGE THEIR ONWARD TRAVEL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR REQUESTS.

6. IN ANSWER TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS IN REFTEL (A), EMBASSY DID NOT REPEAT NOT HAVE PRIOR NOTIFICATION OF AIRCRAFT TIME OF ARRIVAL FROM UGANDA. EMBASSY HAD BEEN INFORMED BY CABLE THAT KARFUNKELS WERE AMONG HOSTAGES. EMBASSY DOES HAVE ACCESS TO LOCAL AID SOCIETY FUNDS FOR SMALL LOANS, BUT KARFUNKELS DID

NOT REQUEST SUCH ASSISTANCE. MOREOVER, THEY HAD COME TO EMBASSY ACCOMPANIED BY FRIENDS WHO PRESUMABLY COULD HAVE HELPED THEM. NOR DID THEY REQUEST SUCH HELP FROM AIR FRANCE WHICH HAD A REPRESENTATIVE AT THE PLAZA HOTEL TO TAKE CARE OF PASSENGERS' NEEDS. HOWEVER, WHEN DIFFICULTY WAS ENCOUNTERED WITH AIRLINES OVER TICKETS, KARFUNKELS DEMANDED THAT EMBASSY PURCHASE NEW TICKETS AND EXPRESSED DISBELIEF WHEN TOLD THAT NO SUCH FUNDS WERE AVAILABLE. NO PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED PREPARING PASSPORT WAIVERS. INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUCH WAIVERS COMPLETE WITH EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE CABLE AND LETTERS INCLUDED IN IN DUTY OFFICER BOOK. DUTY OFFICER CALLED TWA MANAGER EARLY JULY 5 TO ENSURE THAT KARFUNKELS WERE TAKEN CARE OF AND WELL. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES HE DID NOT SEE ANY FURTHER NEED TO HAVE EMBASSY OFFICER ACCOMPANY THEM TO THE AIRPORT.

7. EMBASSY FULLY APPRECIATE KARFUNKELS' EMOTIONAL UPSET AND MADE EVERY EFFORT TO REASSURE AND HELP THEM FOLLOWING THEIR HIJACKING EXPERIENCE AND DETENTION AT ENTEBBE. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS TO US THAT KARFUNKELS, AFTER REFLECTION AND FURTHER THOUGHT, HAVE RAISED A NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS WHICH DID NOT OCCUR TO THEM IN TEL AVIV. WE BELIEVE THE EMBASSY'S ACTIONS WERE RESPONSIVE AND ADEQUATE AND THE KARFUNKELS SHOULD BE SO INFORMED.
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